CHAPTER XXVIII

DECLARATION OP THE EMPIRE *

Bonaparte's Principles—His Comprehension of French Conditions — Meaning of Enghien's Murder — The Dynasties of Europe — The Possibilities of Hereditary Power — The New France — Desire for a Dynasty — Suggestions of Monarchy — The Empire Proposed — The New Constitution — Imperial State — The New Nobility — Device of the Empire — The New Court — The Plebiscite.

STEP by step, laboriously and painfully, by guile and prudence, in the exercise of consummate genius as soldier and politician, Napoleon Bonaparte had now climbed to the pinnacle of revolutionary power. Insubordinate as a subaltern under a worn-out system, he found for his soaring ambition no fitting sphere in the country of his birth, the only fatherland he ever knew; and in that limited field he was both ineffectual as an agitator and unsuccessful as a revolutionary. But with keen insight he studied and apprehended the greater movement as it developed in France. Standing ever at the parting of the ways, and indifferent to principle, he carefully considered each path, and finally chose the one which seemed likeliest to guide his footsteps toward the goal of his ambition. Fertile in resources, he strove always to construct a double plan, and in the failure of

1 See in particular the memoirs of Miot de Melito, Pasquier, S6gur, Thi6bault, Marmont, Lafayette, Savary, Rgmusat, Rapp, Thibaudeau, and Bourrienne; the Souvenirs of Macdonald and Chap- Be Bausset: Cour de Napol6on; Masson: Josephine, Impe'ratrice et Reine; Aulard: Revolution Franfalse; Remade: Relations secretes des agents de Louis XVHI a Paris sous le Consulat. tal; and the Lettres incites. Also,